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AUTHOR Jones, Ruth S.
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ABSTRACT

This document discusses a study undertaken to analyze news media usage among 13- and 17-year-old students. Specifically, television, radio, and newspaper attention levels are assessed and interest in news topics are compared with topics of interest to teenagers during the Vietnam-Watergate era. The objective is to provide information on the impact of the media on the politicization of American youth. Data are derived from secondary analysis of national surveys undertaken by the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 1969 and 1975. More than 2,000 13-year-olds and 2,000 17-year-olds were included in each sample. Measures of news media usage included having a television and/or radio at home, having listened to or watched news yesterday, remembering anything from the program, having read the newspaper yesterday, and remembering any news. Findings indicated that by 1975, American youth of both age groups watched less TV news and read fewer newspapers than their age cohorts in 1969. In addition, although news media usage decreased during this period, individuals who used the news media in 1975 were as likely to recall news topics of interest as media users in 1969. It was also found that no single media dominated adolescents' attention in 1975 and that the linkage between television news and information levels was slightly stronger than the linkages between information levels and the other media. (Author/DB)

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News Media and Politicization: American Youth 1969-1975

by

Ruth S. Jones
Department of Political Science
University of Missouri - St. Louis

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Abstract

News Media and Politicization: American Youth 1969-1975

Using national survey data collected by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (1969 and 1975), this study analyzes changes in news media usage among thirteen and seventeen year old students, compares TV, radio, and newspaper attention levels, and considers changes in news topics of interest to teenagers during the VietNam - Watergate era. By 1975, American youth of both age groups watched less TV news, listened to less radio news, and read fewer newspapers than their age cohorts six years earlier. Although news media usage decreased during this period, those who currently do use the news media are as likely to recall news topics of interest as media users in 1969. Few students are multi-media users for political news but no single media dominates their attention. Cross-sectional analysis indicates that news media usage is only weakly related to levels of political information but that among the three media considered, the linkage is strongest between TV news and information levels.

Only limited attention has been given to the impact of the media on the politicization of young Americans even though the importance of mass media in the lives of these future citizens is widely recognized.* The subordination of media variables in early political socialization studies effectively directed attention away from the media (Kraus & Davis, 1976, Chapt. 2; Chaffee, et. al., 1977). However, recent evidence that "adolescents appear to have done a great deal of learning in the "creche of mass media," (Hollander; 1971, 476) have encouraged those who seek to understand the political socialization process to examine the relationship of media to measures of politicization such as political activity, attitudes, interest, and awareness. While many of these inquiries have resulted in contradictory and inconclusive findings (Chaffee, Ward & Tipton, 1970; Chaffee & Becker, 1975; Johnson, 1973; Conway, Stevens & Smith, 1975; Rubin, 1975,1976), studies that have focused on political knowledge have rather consistently found media exposure and political knowledge to be related (Chaffee, et. al., 1977; Conway, 1975; Feigert, 1976; Dominick, 1976; Jennings & Niemi, 1974). In fact, mass media in general appear to be the major source of political information for young Americans. Television is the primary source for the pre-adolescent, but with age newspapers gain in importance and television viewing of public affairs programs increases.

Although recent studies have provided an impetus for systematic attention to the role of mass media in the political socialization process, with the obvious exceptions of Chaffee (1970) and Jennings and Niemi (1975) a shared constraint of these pioneering efforts has often been that they are case studies of unique populations relying on a cross-sectional mode of analysis. Each study has made contributions toward a better understanding

of the role of the media in politicization; yet, they do not permit generalizations to the total population of young Americans and they provide little information on change vis-a-vis the media. This study is based on a national sample of thirteen and seventeen year olds and focuses on student's attention to news through television, radio, and newspapers in 1969 and 1975. Hence our findings can be readily generalized and they will provide information relevant to media use over time.

The specific questions addressed are: How much attention do young people pay to news media? Did this usage pattern change during the post-Vietnam/Watergate era? Do students rely on one form of news media over another? What do they remember from media news? Are salient news topics specific to each medium or to particular sub-populations of students? Is news media attention related to levels of political information?

Design

The data are a subset of those collected by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the social studies and citizenship assessments of 1969-70 and 1975-76.[1] More than 2,000 thirteen year olds and 2,000 seventeen year olds were included in each sample; questionnaires were administered in a group setting within the students' schools with the aid of a paced audio tape and a professional survey administrator. These thirteen and seventeen year olds are of particular interest because previous studies (Adelson & O'Neil, 1966; Merelman, 1971; Rubinstein, 1972) have indicated that considerable political learning occurs during the early adolescent years.

The measures of news media usage were: Do you have a TV (radio) at home? Did you watch (listen to) the news on TV (radio) yesterday? What do you remember from the news program? Did you read the newspaper yesterday? What news do you remember? The codes for content categories were similar to those

traditionally used for open-ended news-recall questions (Nafziger, MacLean & Engstrom, 1951; Weaver & Mauro, 1978; Rubinstein, 1972). While the questions are specific to a single news-usage opportunity, they strike a balance between the uncertainty of using recall data about multiple events over a longer time period and the impracticability of monitoring actual news media use among a national sample of teenagers.

Democratic theory presumes a strong link between open communication processes and an informed citizenry, and the assumption that news media usage plays an integral role in the political learning of the mass public is widely accepted. Hence, any descriptive analysis of media usage and change over time is enhanced by a direct link to specific indicators of politicization. The unique structure of the NAEP survey design (multiple protocols within and between age cohorts and assessments and staggered release dates) permits an examination of the linkage between media use and political information for the 1975-76 survey only.[2] In addition to media and information measures, specific background information about each student (gender, race, parent's education, type and region of residence) makes it possible to explore the differential impact that micro characteristics have on the use of news media among American youth. Change is reported in terms of the percentage of students using the news media in 1976. Most of the media and information questions were nominal measures and simple contingency coefficients along with measures of significance are used to report relationships. When indicies are used and the data may be assumed to be ordinal or interval, gamma or Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients are reported.

The Findings

Media Usage. Do students use the news media and do they rely on one medium over another? Do they retain news information? Do usage patterns differ

between ages thirteen and seventeen? Have there been changes in news media usage since 1969? The NAEP data confirm that access to mass media is not a problem among youth of this country--virtually all students say they have access to a TV, radio, and newspaper. As indicated in Table 1, by 1975-76 one-third of the seventeen year olds and one quarter of the thirteen year

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Table 1 About Here

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olds report attention to some form of media news. Although these usage rates are not overwhelming, they suggest that the developmental trend found by Jennings and Niemi (1974) in their student-parent study--that news media usage increases with age--is evident during early adolescence. Unlike the Jennings and Niemi study, these data find little variation in students' use of the three media. Three-fourths to four-fifths of the students who use the media are able to report something they have heard, read, or seen and this is a much higher percentage than Neuman (1976) found in his study of adult recall of TV news.

The most striking information of Table 1, however, is the fact that news media usage significantly decreased between 1969 and 1975. Among seventeen year olds, the sharpest decline was in radio usage, the smallest in TV; for thirteen year olds, TV usage dropped the most and newspaper usage the least. Although radio remains the media generating fewest substantive recalls, it is the only one in which there has been significant positive change. In sum, a sizeable number of students do use the news media; those who do, retain news information; the older students are more media-news oriented than the younger ones; students as a whole do not seem to be overly dependent on a single media but attention to news via all three media has declined significantly during the post-Watergate era.

When reports of usage of the three media were combined to create an index of news media usage (ranging from zero for no attention to three for attention to news in all three media) it was also obvious that very few students were multi-media news users. In 1975, only twelve percent of the seventeen year olds and ten percent of the thirteen year olds report using more than one news media.

The data permit only a speculative inquiry into what has occurred within a single cohort (13 year olds) over time. Applying a developmental approach, we can assume that the seventeen year olds in the 1975 study will be slightly less "mature" than nineteen year olds in 1975 (the accurate age comparison for the thirteen year old respondents of 1969) and thus we should expect our data to understate difference in news media usage. As suggested

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Table 2 About Here

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in Table 2, there has been almost no change. Media use of seventeen year olds in 1975 is quite similar to media use of thirteen year olds in 1969. This might be considered an indication that news media usage patterns are fixed very early in life (pre-13). A more plausible explanation would be that the figures do not differ because of the general decline in media usage that was observed by comparing the two age cohorts at the two points in time. Within this interpretation, the similar usage rates of 1969 and 1975 do not refute the general applicability of a developmental model to politicization via the news media. These data simply serve as a caution for and a reminder of the pitfalls of using cross-sectional analysis or single target panel surveys to measure change.

News Topics. Without monitoring the news prior to each survey, there is no way to evaluate the accuracy of students' recall of topics or to assess recall relative to media emphasis. The topics students attribute to the various news coverages can be discussed simply for what they are--recall. The following discussion assumes that recall is related to the saliency of an issue for the respondent.

For both age groups and within all three media, there have been changes in the topics students recall. One partial explanation for the

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Table 3 About Here

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decrease in news media attention may be found in the fact that among the most noticeable topic changes shown in Table 3, for both age groups, is a decrease in attention to war and peace issues. With the decline of activity in VietNam and lulls in the Middle East by 1975-76 these recalls probably reflect less media emphasis in this area. For other topics, the differences between thirteen and seventeen year olds is more pronounced although variation between types of media remains very small. In 1975, both age groups seem to recall stories of criminal acts ("Patricia Hearst's trial" "Policeman was murdered." "Conductor shot in New York.") above all other news items although seventeen year olds were almost as likely to recall something of local or national political news ("School board meeting discussed violence situation in our school." "Carter wins Penn. primary.").

Sub-group Differences. Political socialization research (Abramson, 1977; Jaros, Hirsch & Fleron, 1968) has repeatedly but not always consistently indicated that there are differences in political learning patterns among certain groups of students. Several studies have specifically found the interaction of mass media and political learning to differ according to sub-populations.

Byrne (1969) found a relationship between race and socio-economic status and newspaper usage for political information as well as an interaction within these groups for TV use and positive attitudes toward government. Conway's (1975) study revealed that television news viewing correlated with degree of partisan identification as well as political knowledge, and Chaffee (1970) found reciprocal relationships between media usage and political knowledge.

When news media usage (TV, radio or newspaper) was considered controlling for gender, race, parents' education, or region and community of residence, the basic usage pattern shown in Table 1 was not appreciably altered and the pattern of 1975 looked very much like that of 1969. The exceptions were that among seventeen year olds, blacks were more likely than whites to recall news from TV (parallel to Langton and Jennings) and students from the southeast were more likely than students from other regions to recall newspaper stories. Among thirteen year olds, students from small cities and those whose parents had lowest levels of education were less likely than their peers to report TV news usage while students of the northeast were more attuned to radio news than their peers nationally. One striking change was that both thirteen and seventeen year old females reversed their position of 1969 and became more likely than males (not less) to report attention to TV news. When total media usage was considered, the only sub-population differentiation was that students whose parents had at least a high school education were more likely than their peers of lesser educated parents to use more than one news media.

Even though usage patterns do not differ, do distinct sub-populations have a tendency to recall particular news topics? Does the type of medium make a difference for sub-population topic recall? Has the change over time been unique for specific groups or specific topics of recall? Multivariate analysis indicates that the answer in each case is "No." As a general rule,

the topics reported by students do not vary among sub-populations of students--either within the same media or between the three media. When the five background measures were held constant, with one exception, no clear pattern of topic salience or sensitivity emerged for any sub-group in either age cohort. The exception was that males (thirteen and seventeen) were more likely to recall sports/weather news (especially from TV and newspaper)--not a surprising finding given the traditional emphasis in male socialization on athletic interests. There were slight differences in the amount and direction of change over time experienced by specific sub-populations relative to the national change but no consistent pattern emerged for any group, for any news topic, or for any of the three media.

News Media and Political Information. To test the assumption of a relationship between media usage and political information, responses to the eight political knowledge questions asked of the seventeen year olds (and 10 asked of the thirteen year olds) were dichotomized and the correct or acceptable responses were summed to produce a single information score for each student. Scores could range from 0 to 8 (or 0 to 10). The data shown in Table 4 provide only modest support for the key assumption that media usage relates to an informed

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Table 4 About Here

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citizenry (or, in this case, future citizenry). The relationship is strongest for TV and virtually non-existent for radio news usage. Controlling for demographic background factors, the relationships were altered only for TV news usage. Among the younger students who watched and recalled TV news, the relationship between information and news attention was significantly and more strongly related for blacks than whites (gamma = .60); for those whose parents had at least a high school degree (.36) and those from large urban

areas (.33). Among seventeen year olds, students' race appears to be the only differentiating factor but for this age group, TV usage and information are significantly related only for white students (.35).[3]

The notion of selective perception and retention along with the assumption of a direct relationship between media usage and political information led to an examination of the relationship between the specific type of news topic a student remembered and his/her ability to answer political information questions in that same related area. Specific political information measures could not have been a priori designed to provide a one-to-one match for the news topics reported by students in the open ended questions. However several information questions roughly paralleling the contextual news-topics categories enabled an imperfect test of the relationship between recall topic and political information. We asked, for example, are those who recalled a story about national or local electoral politics more knowledgeable about the impact of redistricting or the institutional structure of Congress than those who did not recall an issue involving American political process or institutions? Eleven such pairs (e.g. the tax question paired with recall of an economic topic; the search warrant question paired with the recall category of law related news) were analyzed for each media. A total of 33 pairs were examined for seventeen year olds and 48 correlates of news topics and political information were considered for the thirteen year olds. Only one of thirty-three contigency coefficients for the seventeen year olds and three of forty-eight for the thirteen year olds were statistically significant but even these were quite weak and no correlation exceeded .12. Although the measures are admittedly crude, there appears to be little or no relationship between the specific news topic recalled vis-a-vis any media and a student's ability to respond to general factual questions about government and politics.

Discussion

Since 1969, news media usage--TV, radio, and newspaper--has declined significantly among American adolescents. By 1975, almost all students had access to all three mass media but less than one-third reported attention to news media. Seventeen year olds were more likely to pay attention to news programs and content than thirteen year olds but among those who were attentive, the recall rate of substantive topics was about equal for both age groups.

Contrary to popular opinion, television is not a dominating source of news information for American youth although few students are multi-media devotees as far as news attention is concerned. Like news usage, the news topics recalled did not differ between the three media but did differ somewhat between the two age groups studied. Among the older students, the topic area that declined the most in popularity was international issues of war and peace; the younger students showed the most marked decrease in news topic recall of environmental issues. In general, neither frequency of news media usage nor topics recalled differed among specific sub-populations of students. Total news media usage was related to levels of political information but the relationships were rather weak. Of the three media, TV news attention was most likely to be correlated with information levels. However, overall information was more strongly related to the demographic variables of race and parental education than media use which reiterates the complex interplay between contextual environment, specific stimuli and political learning.

Based on these data from a national sample of American youth, what can we say about mass media and politicization? Various readers will interpret the preceeding discussion somewhat differently and certainly these data cannot be used to produce a definitive statement of the role (or lack thereof)

of mass media in the political socialization process. However, the findings appear to provide both encouragement and discouragement for those who envision a major role for mass media in the political socialization process.

The most discouraging aspect must be the marked decrease in attention to any form of news media and the fact that media use and levels of political information are so weakly related. Although news media use continues to increase with age, the overall pattern of decline may mean that the news media are losing ground rather than enhancing their role in the socialization process. However, this is not to ignore the indirect and/or informal political socialization that may be included in non-news programs (Chaffee, 1970); these data simply do not permit examination of this potentially important dimension of mass media usage. In an era when social and political issues and concerns arise quickly and are increasingly complex and pervasive, the mass media have been viewed as a major vehicle for insuring that an informed and interested citizenry exists. Without such a citizenry, the foundations of a democratic system of government may be severely strained and its future called into question.

If the trend continues and young people give even less attention to mass media news, how will they develop the wherewithall to be informed, responsive, and participating members of the society? The schools are sorely taxed just to perform the tasks already assigned them, and the traditional institutions of home and church are preoccupied with simply reasserting themselves and transforming their past roles so as to cope with the present.

Although it may be discouraging that so few students turn to more than one medium as a source for political news, it is encouraging that the large majority of those who do pay attention to media news retain something of what they see, hear or read. Also encouraging is the fact that usage and recall for the three media are relatively comparable. This means that whatever the

biases each form of mass communication may carry, these future citizens, as a group, are not getting locked into one specific media-structured mode of looking at social issues and events. While as a unique segment of society they are not multiple media users, neither are these adolescents dictated to and dominated by a single medium.

The fact that sub-populations of students generally do not differ in their media use and attention may speak to a growing universality of information access and social concern within this country. At any rate, news media usage as measured here does not appear to be a source of cleavage among youth.

Two questions that these data provoke but cannot answer are of great interest to both those involved with the news media and those who are concerned with future civic education. When access to mass media has increased, why do we find a decrease in attention to news media? Is it simply a function of the type of events that are occurring in the society--that they are uninteresting or unimportant? That is difficult to accept but possible given that the perceptions and logic of adolescents are often difficult to comprehend.

Is it because young people, like adults, have been jaded, and the post-Watergate syndrome of cynicism and apathy pervades their generation also? If so, then the decline in news media usage may simply be a period effect and efforts should focus on restoring confidence and interest in government rather than on the media per se.

Or has this decline occurred because the news media have lost their appeal (for whatever reasons) and these young people simply are not a news-media generation? If this is the case, a reassessment of media's appeal and approach vis-a-vis these future citizens may be in order.

The second question that obviously flows from these data concerns the link between news media usage and political information. Why isn't it stronger?

As in any research effort, one possible explanation for our findings may be that the measures and techniques employed are not sufficient or appropriate. This explanation is best tested by additional and comparable research. But if the approach of this study has any utility at all, then we have identified a critical area of politicization that warrants further consideration.

Perhaps news media usage at the adolescent level is simply a preconditioning process and should not be expected to be directly linked to political sophistication until later years. If media's primary role is one of an intervening or reenforcing mechanism, then there may be little cause to be concerned about our findings. If media use continues to decline, however, and if the relationship between usage and levels of political information remains weak, then perhaps the early socialization studies that ignored the media as a causal agent in the socialization process have received some vindication.

It is clear that more research is needed before we can begin to provide answers for the causes of the declines in news media usage and the weak relationships between usage and political information. It is equally clear that these two issues must be considered in tandem. Is the linkage weak because the level of usage is relatively low and declining? Or is the decline occurring because there is no linkage? Or are other factors influencing these relationships?

This study of two age cohorts over a six year period suggests a methodological as well as substantive thrust for future research. While maturational effects certainly are operative, generational differences and period effects cannot be ignored if we are to understand the interaction between mass media and the development of a responsible citizenry. Changes (or lack thereof) such as we have observed in media usage within age cohorts and within specific sub-populations will be masked by continued reliance on cross-sectional

analysis of data for a single point in time. Longitudinal analysis which addresses the issues of change will have to be a part of future research efforts if we are to understand and effectively utilize the role of media in the political socialization of present and future citizens.

Acknowledgement

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TABLE 1

News Media Usage 1969-1975

Media Usage	17 year olds		13 year olds	
	1975-76	%Change	1975-76	%Change
Watched TV News	34.2	-4.2[a]	26.3	-12.1[a]
Heard Radio News	33.8	-23.4[a]	20.2	-10.6[a]
Read Newspapers	32.2	-9.2[a]	23.5	-7.6[a]
Recalled topic-TV[b]	86.4	2.1	82.7	2.0
Recalled topic-Radio[b]	76.7	8.3[a]	77.4	7.6[a]
Recalled topic-Newspaper[b]	81.1	-1.2	81.7	-.5
	N = 2216	N=1634	N=2513	N=1792

[a]Significant at the .05 level.

[b]Percentage of respondents who had used the specified media.

TABLE 2

Change in Media Usage:

Single Cohort Through Time

Media	Age						
	1969 13	14	15	16	17	18	1975 19
Watched TV	34.1	——	——	——	(34. 2)*	——	X
Heard Radio News	30.8	——	——	——	(33.8)	——	X
Read Newspapers	31.1	——	——	——	(32.2)	——	X

*Parentheses are used to remind the reader that the use of data on seventeen year olds in 1975 assumes a linear developmental model of news media usage and hence are only suggestive of what may have taken place within the thirteen year old cohort.

TABLE 3

News Topics 1969-1975

Topics Recalled[a]	TV		Radio		Newspaper	
	17	13	17	13	17	13
War/peace issues	2.5(-17.0)[b]	1.1(-11.2)[b]	1.5(-9.3)[b]	.5(-8.7)[b]	1.0(-11.1)[b]	.9(-7.3)[b]
Criminal acts w/o political motive	24.8(16.9)[b]	17.1(4.8)	18.6(10.1)[b]	16.3(3.1)	21.1(11.6)[b]	14.1(1.1)
Accidents, emergencies, injuries	10.4(3.7)	11.5(4.2)	9.5(-5.7)[b]	11.1(-.7)	12.7(2.8)	8.8(-3.5)
Political Criminal Acts	.9(-11.2)[b]	1.6(.1)	.7(-4.4)[b]	1.9(.4)	.5(-5.0)[b]	2.6(1.0)
Nat'l/Local politics, elections, speeches	24.0(7.7)[b]	12.8(3.4)	17.6(7.3)[b]	6.8(-4.0)	12.2(1.2)	8.8(-3.9)
Economics, inflation, unemployment	2.8(.2)	3.2(1.4)	4.2(2.6)[b]	3.9(1.8)	3.0(-.3)	3.6(.7)
Environment, consumer, technology	.9(1.6)	1.7(-14.4)[b]	1.4(-.1)	1.0(-9.2)[b]	.7(-2.1)[b]	1.0(-10.4)[b]
Constitutional law, courts actions	.5(.2)	6.9(6.1)[b]	.6(.5)	3.5(3.3)[b]	1.2(.5)	4.1(3.7)[b]
Weather, sports, schedules	8.0(3.5)	15.2(9.2)[b]	13.0(10.1)[b]	22.6(17.8)[b]	12.6(4.8)[b]	22.9(14.3)[b]
Other	11.5(.0)	11.4(5.1)	9.6(-2.8)[b]	9.7(4.0)	16.0(-3.5)	15.0(3.8)
Nonsical, nonnews, uncodeable	13.6(2.1)	17.4(-2.1)	23.4(-8.3)	22.6(-7.9)	18.3(1.3)	18.3(.5)

[a]Table entries are the percentage of those who had used the media and recalled the particular topic.
[b]Change is significant at the .05 level.

TABLE 4

News Media Usage and Political Information

Relationship Between Information Index Score and	17 yr. olds	13 yr. olds
Combined news media usage	.18[a]	.24[a]
Television news	.19[a]	.17[a]
Radio news	.01	.02
Newspapers	.10[a]	.09[a]

[a]Pearson product moment correlations significant at the .05 level or better.

Footnotes

1. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) seeks to provide descriptive information about the knowledge, understanding, and attitudes of young Americans ages nine, thirteen, and seventeen and to measure changes in educational attainment over time. NAEP is under contract with the Education Commission of the States through funds provided by Congress to the National Center for Educational Statistics. NAEP uses a highly sophisticated three-stage national stratified probability sample of students from which response estimates to the questions asked can be made for the nation as a whole for a given age group and for sub-groups of interest. Nine year olds were excluded from this analysis because the news media variables were not included for that cohort. For a more complete description of NAEP, see J.S. Ahmann, "Assessing National Levels of Achievement in a Systematic Manner," Educational Horizons 52 (Summer, 1974) 179-183 or W.S. Greenbaum, Measuring Educational Progress: A Study of National Assessment. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977) or write directly to NAEP 1860 Lincoln Street, Denver, Colorado.
2. Both age groups were asked identical multiple choice questions of: "What is the main purpose of the United Nations?" and "The Congress of the United States is made up of two parts. One part is the House of Representatives. What is the other part?" and three open-ended questions: "Our government in the United States is called a democracy. What is a democracy?" "It costs a lot of money to build schools and to build highways. Where does this money come from?" "Why might it be good to have the newspapers in a city written and published by more than one company?" In addition, seventeen year olds were asked: "We have a law that the President is the head of our armed forces instead

of a military officer. What is the reason for this law?" "The Supreme Court ruling of "one man-one vote" is changing the make up of state legislatures. Which one of the following groups will be represented by fewer legislators as a result of this decision?" "Have you ever helped in an election campaign? What did you do?" The thirteen year olds were asked: "Does the President have the right to do anything affecting the United States that he wants to do?" "Does every family in the United States have enough money to send their children to college?" "Generally the law does not allow the police to search somebody's house without written permission from a judge. Why do we have this law?" "What might happen if people could not vote in secret?" and "Where is a good place for these people to go for help...someone who has just been robbed? is hurt or sick? who needs a baby sitter during the day for his children? is traveling through your town and needs help?" A summary measure was developed for these four "help" questions and each student was assigned a score ranging from 0 to 4.

3. In the general NAEP reports, the relationship between both race and parental education and general cognitive performance persists from 1969 to the 1975 assessment and what we may be observing here is a function of background relationships rather than media. Indeed, using our information index, parent's education and race were found to be modestly correlated (.26 to .31) with students' information scores--blacks scoring lower and those of higher-educated parents scoring higher.

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